Lerntree Behaviour Policy

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Statement

What we are writing this policy to address and do

At Lerntree, we take a holistic view of behaviour, considering that children are in social-emotional development and need a safe space to develop positive social behaviours and skills. We also acknowledge that the “hygiene” of an environment impacts behaviours and development.

Many behavioural problems in children disappear when the environment works for children instead of against them and models collaboration instead of micro-management and domination. We take a step away from punishments and rewards for behaviour - and put in place positive tools to learn and improve our social literacy, offering transferable skills for wellbeing in the short and long term.

We begin with the type of leadership model and power dynamics in the learning environment, including how ‘adults’ interact with ‘children’. We choose a collaborative and empowering leadership model in which everyone works to maintain a safe environment.

Aims

What we want to achieve with this policy

To create and maintain a harmonious and safe environment essential for optimal learning and development.

We aim to develop social literacy skills, healthy boundaries, and the fundamentals of healthy relationships both prior to and when dealing with social breakdown situations that arise in the group, keeping the group a safe place to play, learn, and enjoy together.

Every action refers to our catchphrase: **Lerntree must be a safe place for everyone.**

Objectives

Itemised checklist of how we carry out the policy

- **Culture:** Instil a culture of equality and empowerment, collaboration and responsibility, compassion and allowing time for learning.
- **Risk Assessments:** The Risk Assessment document provides guidance around safety on all potential threats and hazards. Dynamic Risk Assessments are made by the group at the start of each session at every location we visit.
- **Equality and Equity**: We treat everyone equally by removing ageism, and we provide equity by recognising that people have different needs and circumstances, requiring tailored support to achieve the same outcome. We meet each person where they are, each day.
- **Gentle Feedback:** Direct and polite communication and reflective listening skills are a standard form of communication at meetings and with facilitators.
- **Understanding Social Behaviour:** We offer a short workshop on Red brain - Blue brain and information handout.
- **Social Safety Agreement:** A document written, agreed and maintained by everyone in the group. This gives everyone the opportunity to discuss expectations to avoid misunderstandings, to work collaboratively on a consent based agreement.
- **Consent Check-in:** If in doubt we can check-in if we give consent to others behaviour, or the other person/people give consent to our behaviour.
- **Group Meetings:** We provide the space for everyone to have a voice and learn how to use it, to be heard, hear others and see from different points of view.
- **Raising Problems:** We provide guidelines and a meeting platform to raise problems and resolve conflict. Meetings enable everyone to choose, agree, respectfully disagree, and resolve problems responsibly and respectfully. Facilitators validate emotions and guide to fixing problems, not people.
- **Favourite Parts of the Day:** A stress-reducing exercise to promote well-being and wire a positive mindset.

Outcome

An environment where everyone feels valued and part of a group. Any problems that arise are sorted out quickly by those in the group and in a respectful way that brings about positive change. In the short term, we have a harmonious atmosphere that underpins emotional and physical wellbeing. While in the long term all those in the learning environment gain transferable skills for life - for friendships, work places and future families.

Definitions

Definition of ‘behaviour’

Behaviour is the product of:

- Environment - caught behaviours that have been modelled and then mimicked
- Basic needs - being met or unmet, for example to be seen, heard and express emotions
- Communication - struggles due to developmental stages and abilities
- Biological urges - for example play schema, motor development, reflexes
- Trauma triggered behaviours
- Protection - rejection to force, coercion, unreadiness, too much too soon

Definition of 'challenging behaviours'

Behaviour that *challenges safety* and *challenges the group to turn a negative situation into positive change*. Rather than labelling the person as the problem, we talk about a person's behaviour as 'challenging' when it puts them or those around them at risk; it is usually taken to mean aggression (physical or verbal), self-injury, damage to property or socially inappropriate behaviour. However, there is also a need to recognise and respond to behaviour that has a negative impact on a person's wellbeing and/or stops or makes it difficult for the person to be involved in ordinary activities and relationships.

Challenging behaviour is:

- Intentionally hurting someone either physically or emotionally
- Unintentionally hurting someone either physically or emotionally
- Play that has gone too far and is no longer fun or safe
- Teasing and shaming
- Threats and manipulation
- Name calling
- Damaging property
- Unwanted and forced behaviours
- Stealing
- Discrimination aimed at certain groups or individuals
- Mean humour
- Possession of illegal substances
- Cyberbullying
- Indecent exposure, masturbation and any other sexualised behaviour
- Any of the above that is repeated behaviour, or has the potential to be repeated over time
- Targeting new visitors and new members of the group

Equally as concerning, though often unseen as these behaviours fail to trigger the alarm systems of others:

- Avoidance and withdrawal
- Sulking
- Self-harm (physical, verbal and emotional)

Section 1 The Learning Environment

The Preventative Environment is provided through:

- Working in agreement
- Social Safety Agreement
- Skilled Facilitators
- Relationship First - Secure Attachment

Working in Agreement

Working from agreements helps *everyone* know what is expected of them and what they are entitled to. Working “in agreement” offers willing participation, partnership-empowerment dynamics, and supports human rights. We ask every person entering Lerntree to agree on a set of social parameters that provide a safe learning environment.

- We agree to not hurt anyone or anything (including ourselves), or destroy property
- Choose respectful and kind language, with considered response
- Every person has the right to their opinion and voice

Social Safety Agreement

The group arrives at a shared Social Safety Agreement using the following five discussion points. It is important that every person in the group provides as many of the strategies as possible – facilitators take a supportive role with reflective listening and fill in any gaps.

1. If someone is hurting you (emotionally/physically) what can you do to gently let them know, in a way that will feel safe?
2. If you see someone hurting another person (emotionally/physically), what can you do?
3. If you see someone looking upset when you are relating to them – what can you do?
4. Any other ideas for maintaining a safe environment for everyone?
5. Agree on what behaviour is not okay in the group. Using the definition in this document, discuss and agree on a list of behaviours that are not acceptable or conducive to an authentic learning environment.

Skilled Facilitators

Facilitators who lead and hold the Lerntree environments provide practical application of:

- Knowing when to step in and how to step in if necessary
- Self-regulation to respond calmly and co-regulate
- Comfortable with conflict
- Conflict resolution skills with partnership dynamics
- The lens to decode behaviour and power dynamics
- Growth mindset and vocabulary

Relationship First - Secure Attachment

The basic need for secure attachment that is recognised in early childhood and continues through childhood is key to emotional development and achieving authentic learning states. Children of all ages require their own ‘trusted adult’ to work alongside, to make sure their educational and development needs are met, providing what would be termed as “additional support” in a traditional education setting. This role can include: identifying the *young person's* interests, concerns, areas of growth, along with helping planning their day, and making resources available.

Key areas to accommodate for are:

- Adult to child ratio
- Trust-based settle-in policy
- Sense of belonging, both physically and emotionally
- Having an emotionally available, mutually responsive adult

Section 2 Resolving Concerns Procedure
(working in the group)

What happens when challenging behaviour shows up in the group and threatens the safe environment? We work with individuals and the group to overcome challenges and learn social literacy skills - to create a safe environment where we can all work together.

- Co-creating and referring to the group Social Safety Agreement
- Non-Violent Communication (NVC)
- Raising a Problem for resolution
- Group communication exercises
- Incident Report Log

Co-creating and referring to the Social Safety Agreement
The Agreement made upon joining the space and any subsequent updates made after joining, is used to refer back to on what is and is not agreed. This agreement reflection can be helpful to someone who has stepped outside of their agreement, in order to register where they can make improvements or seek help.

Non-Violent Communication
Facilitators will engage in conversation with members of the group who are struggling, using NVC to identify feelings and needs with a view to resolving problems.

Raising a Problem for resolution
People in the group can raise problems in a number of ways;

- Call a meeting with the group to raise a problem
- Directly with a facilitator, to be raised at the next meeting
- Directly with a facilitator, to be raised or dealt with anonymously
- A Social Dynamic Concern may be raised if the risk is high

Group communication exercises
Communication games and discussions are a great way to apply theory in a practical and fun way. As a group, we run exercises to strengthen skills in empathy, reflective listening, compassion, and dialectical thinking (inclusivity).

Incident Report Log
Any serious incidents involving harm, intention of harm, or requiring intervention should be accurately recorded on an incident report form, and shared with parents that day. Reports provide the following information: date, time and location, description of the act, names of those involved, witnesses, any injuries sustained, and the actions taken in response.

Follow-up after an incident: Whenever an act of violence or aggression has occurred, we ensure everyone concerned is safe and allowed to discuss the incident and its impact on themselves and others in the group.

Review: We review incident logs and make necessary changes to internal policies and routines, to promote positive behaviour and support those involved while helping reduce or prevent incidents from occurring in the future. In a review, staff look over the incident logs, discuss how they dealt with the situation and, if required, how they could deal with the situation differently in the future. Facilitators ensure that procedures for responding to incidents match the level of risk.

Section 3 Raising Concern Procedures
(working with parents)

- Communication from Parents Log
- Social Dynamic Concern

Communication from Parents Log (From parents/carers to Lerntree)
If a parent is concerned and they wish to share about behaviours happening for their child at home or at Lerntree, we ask this to be sent in an email to clarecaro@rootandbranchout.co.uk. If necessary or requested a follow up meeting will be organised for the parent with two staff members to discuss.

Social Dynamic Concern (From Lerntree to parents/carers)
A Social Dynamic Concern plan is raised with parents/carers of those people involved where incidents stemming from an individual's behaviour are repeating and put members of the group at risk, if there has been no change after the following actions have taken place;

- Co-creating and referring to the group Social Safety Agreement
- Non-Violent Communication (NVC)
- Raising a Problem for resolution
- Group communication exercises
- Incident Report Log

The Social Dynamic Concern plan sets out a dynamic plan for actions to be taken to prevent further harm or risk of further harm.

Families may be asked to attend as many as 3 meetings to resolve the issues when the behaviours are significantly impacting on the rights of others.

Meeting 1) parent of child who is being asked to temporarily withdraw to raise the problem with parent and to outline the procedure that lies ahead

Meeting 2) parent and child repeat meeting with child present - and recap of social safety agreement and behaviour policy to look at how their behaviour doesn't align, outline options for the temporary withdrawal

Meeting 3) after the reintroduction to see whether it is working for everyone and the safety of the group, the longevity of Lerntree.

Section 4 Corrective Environment Procedures

When the group environment is not a **safe place for <u>everyone</u>**, measures are taken to **make <u>the group</u> environment a safe place**.

Based on the nature of the behaviour and the risk of safety to individuals or the group, we take one of the following options;

- Remaining in the Learning Environment
- Leaving the Learning Environment - Temporary Withdrawal
- Leaving the Learning Environment - Permanent Dismissal

Remaining in the learning environment

If a person's behaviour is *challenging* <u>and does not *impact*</u> *on the freedom, safety and enjoyment of others*, then we either put in the co-regulation and trigger intervention support with a timeline for reasonable improvement to be seen by.

Co-regulation Intervention; The role of the facilitator steps up to one-to-one co-regulation and 'shadowing'. This role requires the co-regulator to find behaviour patterns and triggers, monitor the triggers as the young person develops skills, hones their own self-regulation skills, finds appropriate outlets to safely express themselves, as well as intervening if necessary to provide a *safe, secure and stable* environment for all. Thus, providing the environment for the learner to regulate themselves and an adult they can co-regulate with.

Interventions are low-key with as little disruption to the learning environment as possible. Interventions focus on the <u>quality of the relationship</u> the adult offers the child during any of the following practical activities:

- Removing the young person from the group, to connect, calm and reflect
- Non-verbal connection - hand on shoulder, sitting or standing alongside the young person
- Grounding - for example taking a walk, walk-and-talk or nature-bathing
- Social engagement - for example 'serve and return' care moments, hot chocolate or sharing food

Trigger Intervention; Triggers are the points where behaviour switches into a 'fight, flight or freeze' reaction. Adults within the learning environment are expected to be able to recognise triggers and support those triggered, in others and in ourselves.

If a member of staff is triggered, another staff member will step in to relieve them. If necessary, by suggesting they "take a break" if their trigger has gone unnoticed by them.

Leaving the Learning Environment

If a person's behaviour remains *challenging* <u>and *negatively impacts*</u> *on the freedom, safety and enjoyment of others*, then the learner must be removed from the environment.

- Temporary withdrawal
- Permanent withdrawal

Removing individuals is only taken when safety becomes an issue, the risk of repeated behaviour is too high or harmful, or when there is no other foreseeable way to resolve the issue.

Temporary Withdrawal
A meeting with the young person, their family and members of staff meet to discuss the following options, while considering the age of the learner, resources for corrective help, the safety of all others in the learning environment:

- The young person and family are offered the option to temporarily withdraw, to seek professional help.
- The young person and family are offered the option to permanently withdraw.

Permanent Withdrawal
When returning from temporary withdrawal, if *the challenging behaviour* persists, then it is agreed that we can ask the family to withdraw their child on a permanent basis. This action will only be taken if all other options have failed.

If behaviour that took place was of a serious nature and was witnessed by staff, then we reserve the right to ask the family to withdraw their child on a permanent basis, with immediate effect.